



# NEWS

*from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

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## SERVICE ISSUES FINAL 1997-98 WATERFOWL HUNTING FRAMEWORKS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued final regulatory frameworks for the 1997-98 waterfowl hunting season, generally increasing the season lengths and bag limits for ducks. The Service also continued the popular "Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day" for a second year to provide the opportunity for parents and other adults to take children hunting.

Under the frameworks, states are allowed to choose a daily bag limit of up to six ducks, except in the Pacific Flyway, where the limit may be seven ducks. As always, there are specific limits for individual species, such as black ducks, canvasbacks, and northern pintails, within the daily bag limit.

Season lengths for ducks can be up to 60 days in the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways, 74 days in the Central Flyway (97 days in the High Plains), and 107 days in the Pacific Flyway.

Changes from last year include one additional duck in the Atlantic, Mississippi and Central Flyway overall daily bag limit, and an additional 10 days in the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyway seasons and 14 days in the Central and Pacific Flyway seasons.

Within the bag, the Service increased the daily bag limit on pintails to three birds and mallard hens to two birds.

Seasons for most goose and swan populations remained unchanged from previous years. In the Atlantic Flyway, the season on migratory Canada geese remains closed to allow the population to recover.

"For the fourth year in a row, the weather conditions in the key prairie nesting areas have been highly favorable, leading to record duck populations," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark. "As a result, the Service has been able to continue to offer sportsmen and women additional opportunities to hunt."

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The Service is predicting a fall migration of 92 million ducks, topping last year's 90 million and the highest on record since 1970. The favorable fall flight estimate follows on the heels of the Service's earlier breeding duck survey, which counted 42.6 million breeding ducks in key nesting areas, the highest level since the survey began in 1955.

The Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day provides young people an extra hunting day outside the regular season. The day must be held outside of any regular duck season on either a weekend or holiday when youths have the maximum opportunity to participate. The day can be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck season framework or within any split of a regular duck season.

Each state wildlife agency chooses whether to hold the special hunt and, if so, selects its day. Participants must be 15 or younger and accompanied by an adult at least 18 years old. The adult is not allowed to hunt ducks but could participate in other open seasons.

Additional details about the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day and the late-season hunting regulations were published in the Federal Register on August 20 and Sept 26, respectively.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages 511 refuges and 64 national fish hatcheries.

The agency also enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, stocks recreational fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and assists foreign governments in their conservation efforts. It oversees the Federal Aid program that funnels Federal excise taxes on angling and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies. This program is a cornerstone of the Nation's wildlife management efforts, funding fish and wildlife restoration, boating access, hunter education, shooting ranges, and related projects across America.